

Story 945 1977 Tape 27)

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Location: Erzurum, capital city
of Erzurum Province

Date: March 22, 1977

Habik Father¹ and Sultan Murat I²

People come here from all parts of Turkey, and all of them ask about the location of Habik Father's tomb. He used to walk around here with earrings in his ears. He came here to Erzurum from Baghdad, back in the time of Sultan Murat I.

After he had immigrated into this area, he wrote a letter to Sultan Murat I in which he said, "I have moved here from Baghdad. I should like to have some assistance from you in building a lodge for myself here."

When Sultan Murat I received the letter, he read it quickly. Then he tore it up and muttered, "I cannot help every dervish who comes into my realm from some other country."

Later that same day the padişah felt a desire to bathe in a public bathhouse. He ordered his men to have the bath prepared for his use. The servants made the necessary arrangements very quickly, but Habik Father had reached

¹ Habik Father was one of the best-known saints of the Erzurum region. His tomb is known as Küpeli Shrine.

² Sultan Murat I reigned from 1360 to 1389.

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Istanbul before the padişah had left his palace to go to the bath ³

The padişah had ordered his men not to allow anyone else to enter the bath during the time that he would be using it. Habik Father, however, entered the bath unseen, removed his clothes, and sat down beside one of the marble basins into which water was flowing. A few minutes later the padişah arrived, went past the many soldiers guarding the doors, and entered the bathhouse. When he looked inside the building, he at first saw no one there, but he heard some noises coming from somewhere inside the building. Moving in the direction from which the sounds came, he saw a man taking a bath. Summoning his soldiers immediately, he asked them, "What orders did I give you? I told you not to permit anyone else to enter this bathhouse during the time I was to use it, and you reported that the building was empty. Look over in that corner! There sits a man taking a bath. Well, don't touch him now. Let him finish his bath." While he was speaking, the padişah had suddenly realized that anyone who could have gotten past the guards

³ Implicit here is the belief that saints could travel great distances in minutes by what modern ESP students would call "teletransportation." Erzurum is several hundred miles from Istanbul.

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unseen must be a very special person. Approaching the man, the sultan said, "Hello, Father."

Habik Father said "Hello" to the padişah. In a public bath it is almost impossible to determine who is rich who is poor, for everyone there is naked. Whether padişah or servant, all men look alike in a public bath. All are born naked and will be buried naked.⁴ Depend upon nothing except your Creator, Sir. He it is who puts you here, and the next moment he may take you away!

The padişah asked Habik Father, "Haven't you been here very long bathing? See how much dirt is still coming off your body!"

Habik Father answered, "Sir, inasmuch as I have devoted all my time and effort to cleansing my inside, I have previously given little attention to my outside." After pondering this for a moment, the padişah understood what Habik Father was saying.

Let me give you an example of what he meant. If garments should become soiled, these garments are washable. You can wash your clothes or give them to a dry cleaner to have the stains removed. But if your character is stained there is no way in which you can remove that stain

⁴ This is more a figure of speech than a fact. All Moslems are buried in a garment or shroud of some kind.

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will take it to the grave with you. The clothing stain amounts to nothing, for we can change our dress. We can put on another suit or buy a new one. But we cannot change our character or change our name. We cannot clean our inside so easily. We must be more careful with that. We must preserve our name, our character, for honor is the most valuable thing we can possess in this world. There is nothing more distinguished or holy than honor. You work your honor, and you live by your honor.

The padişah then asked Habik Father, "O Father, would you like to have me rub your back with some kese?"⁵

Habik Father said, "All right, son. Rub my back

As the padişah was scrubbing Habik Father's back, he decided to test the wisdom of this old man. He said, "Father, I want to ask you something.

"Go ahead and ask," said Habik Father.

Sultan Murat asked him, "Father, can you tell me what our padişah is doing in his palace at this very moment?"

Habik Father looked into the padişah's eyes and said "At this very moment the padişah is rubbing my back."

⁵ Something used for scrubbing bodies in a Turkish bath. It may be a hair glove, but more often it is the soft pulp of a plant. Bath attendants provide this service when it is desired.

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Realizing from this the great wisdom of Habik Father padişah knelt down at once and kissed his hands. He then said, "O dear Father, I need you. I need your advice."

Habik Father said, "Oh, son, I wanted you to help me build a dervish lodge,⁶ but you tore up my letter and said, 'I cannot help every dervish who wants to build a lodge.

was the reason I came to your bathhouse, and now that I have seen you, I feel relieved."

The padişah realized then what a serious mistake he made

⁶ The word used here is tekke.